

## Mercury Thermometers

Do you need your mercury thermometer?

If you don't, consider this: mercury spills can be costly both in time and dollars. If you can use another type, alcohol for example, consider it.

For disposal, submit a C260a form to the Waste Management Team or call 3-9748.

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### **What's so bad about mercury?**

(Information from the US EPA)

Mercury that is released in any way can find its way into our air, land, and water. In water, mercury can be transformed into methylmercury, which is highly toxic even in very small amounts. One gram of mercury per year can contaminate all the fish in a 20-acre lake.

Since methylmercury bioaccumulates (remains in living tissue instead of being naturally flushed out), a very small amount of mercury in a lake can lead to dangerous levels of methylmercury in fish. Methylmercury affects our nervous systems and kidneys, and can cause emotional instability, mental and memory disturbances, and speech disorders. Fetuses can also be exposed to methylmercury through their mother's consumption of fish.

Mercury thermometers are a significant source of mercury to the environment, per the US EPA. Here's a link to their page on thermometers:  
<http://www.epa.gov/glnpo/bnsdocs/hg/thermometers.html>

Thermometer use amounts to a little more than 1% of the total mercury use in the U.S. But that percentage represents an amount of about 4.3 tons of mercury.